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ABSTRACT

Much evidence exists to show that white enrollment declines with the advent of desegregation. This study conducted in Jefferson County, Kentucky (Louisville) explains the causes of this decline in terms of birth rate decline, nonpublic school enrollment, and movement out of the county. A determination of the degree that each of these take place and their relationship to desegregation is made. In addition, interviews were conducted with affected parents to ascertain their attitudes toward desegregation related subjects, and to collect information on their demographic characteristics. (Author)

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A METROPOLITAN DESEGREGATION PLAN - - WHERE THE WHITE STUDENTS WENT

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The Jefferson County Education Consortium and the University of Louisville, supported by funds provided by the National Institute of Education, are completing the final year of a three year study of the effects of court ordered desegregation on enrollment patterns in the Jefferson County (Louisville) Kentucky School System.

The Jefferson County Kentucky Public Schools implemented, under federal court order, a comprehensive desegregation plan in September 1975. The plan included provisions for busing 22,000 students, 11,000 white and 11,000 Black, to achieve racial ratios acceptable to the court. While the Jefferson County plan does not cover the entire metropolitan area because contiguous school districts in Indiana are not included, it is comprehensive and involves all of the schools in the Jefferson County School District including those which existed in the Louisville Independent School District prior to April 1975.

This presentation provides information about the study as it nears completion. The presentation consists of three parts. (1) An introduction to and description of the issues surrounding the problem of white flight. (2) A trends analysis of enrollment patterns which describes the effect of the desegregation events of the mid 70's and explains where students who left the system went. (3) A summary of the results of interviews with the parents of students who withdrew from the Jefferson County School System.

Introduction

The history of school desegregation has been characterized by the

elimination of dual school systems in the South and movement towards increasingly more radical pupil reassignment plans intended to confront the problems of de facto segregation throughout the rest of the country. The concerted effort to desegregate public schools in the U.S., which started with the original Brown decision (1954) has been slowed because the courts are becoming increasingly reluctant to take an activist role in remedying school desegregation.

Blatant de jure segregation has been eliminated and existing de facto segregation can be remedied only by recourse to cross-district desegregation and sweeping pupil reassignment patterns. Because of the large distances involved, massive busing of students is usually required. In recent years the Supreme Court has been unwilling to order such plans. This position has been based on two crucial cases. In Milliken v. Bradley (1974) the Supreme Court overruled both the Federal District Court and Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals which had ordered a metropolitan desegregation plan for Detroit and surrounding suburban districts. The Court ruled that before such a plan could be ordered, it was first necessary to establish that all districts involved had either committed acts that enhanced segregation or failed to operate a unitary school district. In Washington v. Davis (1976) it was ruled that disparate impact (de facto segregation) was not sufficient grounds for finding that constitutional rights had been abridged, intent first had to be established. The impact of these two decisions has been to impede the implementation of cross-district desegregation plans. According to Martha M. McCarthy (1978), we may be witnessing the emergence of an entirely new definition of discrimination and a movement away from Supreme Court activism in the school desegregation arena.

Accompanying this change in focus by the Supreme Court has been a shift in the substance and character of the opposition to school desegregation. Instead of Southern rustics whose opposition was visceral and manifested by overt acts we are witnessing the rise of a neo-conservative movement whose opposition is manifested by advocating change in public policy. The opposition comes from individuals who at one time were considered liberals but who now question whether school desegregation has a positive effect on any student's school performance, Black or white. They also argue that desegregation, particularly when accompanied by the use of busing leads to an increase in the movement of white families away from school districts involved in such plans. A considerable body of research exists which purports to show that as school desegregation increases white parents leave the school system causing a decline in white enrollment and ultimately resegregation. This phenomenon is referred to as white flight.

James Coleman (1975) examined the 70 largest central city school districts and found that the amount of school desegregation was related to declines in white enrollment. The decline in white enrollment was then explained by the hypothesis that parents responded to increased desegregation by leaving such communities. This is the basis for his case for white flight. Both his methodology and his results were quickly challenged. Using the same data base, Farley (1975) and Rossell (1975) were critical of Coleman and their analyses of his data base contradicted him. The divergent conclusions resulted from differences in methodological approach. Upon further analyses both Rossell (1977) and Farley (1977) eventually have confirmed Coleman's hypothesis.

Declining white enrollment can undeniably be associated with increased desegregation. Attempts to dispute these conclusions through a further reanalysis of the same data will be futile. It is not Coleman's results or the conclusions based on these results that should be questioned but the assumptions that underlie his basic model. Just because white enrollment declines at the same time that desegregation increases does not prove that increased desegregation causes white enrollment to decline. Furthermore a decline in white enrollment does not mean that whites are leaving the district. The decline may reflect the overall decline that has been occurring in birthrate, movement to non-public schools or some other demographic phenomenon unrelated to school desegregation. The majority of research on white flight has used the Coleman model mainly because data for more sophisticated analysis is not readily available.

David Armor (1978) has used a variation on this general model by including birthrate and outmigration rates. The results he obtains support the conclusions of Coleman. Except in the case of Jefferson County, where he obtained data from the authors of this report, he does not take transfers to non-public schools into consideration.

The present study is a case study of enrollment patterns in one school district rather than the usual cursory look at a large number of school districts.

Trends Data Analysis

White aggregate birth and white public school membership data are presented in Figure 1. The peak public school membership was attained during 1970-71 school year and corresponded with the highest number of aggregate births. Preceding desegregation threats in the Louisville

community, the white public school membership had begun to drop gradually between 1970-71 and 1972-73. From 1972-73 to 1973-74, also preceding any desegregation threat, white membership began to decline at a more rapid rate.

It appeared certain during the spring and summer of 1974 that a desegregation plan would be implemented in September of 1974; however, court action delayed the actual implementation until September of 1975. Figure 2 reveals a sharp decline between 1974-75 and 1975-76. The decline continued, but at a decreasing rate, through 1977-78.

Membership data shown in Figure 1 is reported for the end of the first month of school for the school years 1956-57 through 1977-78 with the exception of the 1975-76 school year. The desegregation plan was implemented in September, 1975 and community reaction included boycotts, street demonstrations and near-riots in some sections of the community. In reporting fall enrollment to the State Department of Education for that year, the school system used the end of the first quarter (third month) figure, and that figure is used in this report. Additionally, interviews with school system officials (Espin, 1977; Berlin, 1977; Doyle, 1977) lead to the conclusion that the end of the quarter figure was artificially depressed by 2,500 to 3,000 students. Information from those interviews can be summarized as follows: 1) an estimated 2,000 students who would have ordinarily enrolled during the fall quarter waited until after the beginning of the winter quarter because of the boycott action and other community unrest; 2) truancy cases adjudicated in the courts during 1975-76 were 800 more than during a normal year; and 3) although solid figures are not available, it appeared that many students who became sixteen during the

summer and fall of 1975 did not return to school.

It is obvious from the preceding analysis that a decline in white public school enrollment took place. A major portion of the decline can be attributed to the declining birth rate. Further explanations of the decline was sought through an examination of non-public school enrollment.

Non-public school enrollment data for the years 1965-66 through 1977-78 are presented in Figure 2. Non-public school membership was on the decline until the school year 1974-75. From the 1965-66 total of 46,165 students to the 1973-74 total of 25,718 students, non-public school membership declined by 20,447. Consistent with the national trend, parochial schools in Jefferson County were experiencing losses in membership.

Judge James Gordon, on July 23, 1974, under mandate of the U. S. Sixth Circuit Court in Cincinnati, ordered merger of the Louisville and Jefferson County School Districts and the implementation of a desegregation plan beginning September 1974. Although the plan did not actually go into effect until the following school year, the downward trend in non-public school membership, which had begun as early as 1965-66, sharply reversed in the 1974-75 school year following the initial threat of desegregation. Membership in non-public schools increased by 2,197 students in the school year 1974-75 following the desegregation "scare;" gains of approximately 2,500 students were registered in 1975-76, the first year of the desegregation plan, and again in 1976-77. The rate of increase slowed slightly in 1977-78 with a membership gain of 1,047. The 1975-76 increase in non-public schools occurred primarily in Catholic membership. Later, it was evidenced mainly in other non-public schools (see Table I).

Further analysis of non-public school membership trends requires an

extrapolation of the data beginning with the 1974-75 school year. This extrapolation is shown as "expected" in Figure 3. The extrapolation is obtained by projecting the non-public school membership along the same trend line which had been established prior to the first desegregation event; i.e., the threat of desegregation order which developed in Jefferson County in the spring and summer of 1974. The sharp gain in non-public school membership correlated in time with this first desegregation event. To arrive at estimates of how many students were enrolled in non-public schools, who would not have been had there been no desegregation event, it was necessary to extend the established trend and assume that the major factors influencing that trend would have remained constant. The decline in birth rate, as indicated by aggregate birth data, was well established and affecting public and non-public schools alike.

Table II shows expected membership, actual membership, and the difference between the two for years 1974-75 through 1977-78. The "difference" column represents the number of students attending non-public schools who might not have attended in the absence of a desegregation order. These data show that a sizeable number of parents in Jefferson County transferred their children to non-public schools at the same time that the desegregation plan was being implemented.

The initial trends analysis established the number of white students lost from the Jefferson County School System and identified the number of students gained by the non-public schools. The analysis was continued in an attempt to determine how many students were being lost by the school system as a result of residential white flight. This was accomplished through an examination of total white membership as a percent of aggregate

births, an analysis of net migration estimates, and public school membership figures for surrounding counties.

Figure 3 presents total white membership (public and non-public) by treating the non-public school membership as an essentially white population and combining it with the white public school membership data first presented in Figure 1. Thus an approximate total white membership in Jefferson County schools, 1965-66 through 1977-78 is represented. In addition, Figure 3 includes the white aggregate birth data for 1948-70, one year before the peak in both aggregate births and public school membership. From 1969-70 through 1973-74 the total white membership declined, roughly parallelling the decline in aggregate births. A sharp drop was recorded in 1975-76, coincident with the first year of desegregation. The decline continued in 1976-77 and 1977-78 at a slower rate. As previously noted, the 1975-76 membership was probably an artificially depressed number because many students failed to enroll in the public schools until after the end of the first quarter when these data were collected (see pg. 4).

Additional analysis of the trend in total white membership in Jefferson County was possible when these same data were displayed in Figure 4. This graph shows total white membership as a percentage of aggregate births for the years 1965-66 through 1977-78. Also, for the years 1975-76, 1976-77 and 1977-78, an expected total white membership as a percentage of aggregate births is represented. The data revealed in Figure 4 show that total white membership, as a percentage of aggregate births, peaked at approximately 95% in the school years 1965-66, 1966-67, and 1967-68; from that point the percentage began to drop at a slowly accelerating rate until 1975-76, the first year of desegregation, when there was a preciptous drop.

The data presented concerning total white membership make it apparent that losses of white students had begun in Jefferson County much earlier than the advent of desegregation in 1975. To validate this analysis, estimates of net migrations for Jefferson County were obtained. These data are presented in Table III (Brockway, 1977).

The net migration estimates validate the observation that Jefferson County, as a result of out migration, was losing persons of school age from 1960-75. In the face of an increasing birth rate until 1971, the effect of out migration was causing the total white membership to stabilize and begin to decline well before the desegregation events of 1974 and 1975.

Using the percentage of aggregate births which could have been expected had there been no desegregation plan (see Figure 4), as well as the percentages and total white membership (TWM) figures, the difference between the two is presented in Table IV for the years 1975-76 through 1977-78.

In analyzing Table IV it is noted that the public school membership for 1975-76 was in all probability, artificially depressed, as explained earlier in this paper (see pg. 4); therefore, the difference shown for the school year 1975-76 is probably inflated by about 2,500 to 3,000 students.

Total public school membership figures for the eight counties, three in southern Indiana, and five in Kentucky, contiguous with Jefferson County are presented in Figure 4. The membership gain in the eight contiguous counties was 3,884 from 1974-75 to 1977-78. In 1972-73, the membership gains were modest, apparently reflecting the national drop in birth rate. Coincident with the desegregation events in Jefferson County, the membership gains accelerated somewhat during the desegregation "scare" in 1974-75, and during implementation of the desegregation plan in 1975-76 and 1976-77 (see Figure 4). A gain was registered in 1977-78, but at a slower rate.

These data tend to validate the trends information concerning expected and actual total white membership in Jefferson County discussed earlier.

The trends data regarding moves outside Jefferson County during the initial years of the desegregation plan seem to suggest that relatively few families left the county as a reaction to the implementation of that plan.

Data for 1978-79 have not been fully analyzed. However, preliminary analysis indicates that 1) non-public school enrollments in Jefferson County have peaked, with the total for 1978-79 about the same as it was for 1977-78, 2) white public school enrollment continues to decline and the decline is almost entirely attributable to the declining birth rate and the higher than expected enrollment in non-public schools, 3) there is no difference between actual and expected total white membership.

In Armor's study (1978) he considers non-public enrollment for only one system, Jefferson County, using data obtained from the present study. He concludes that there is outmigration that can be attributed to the desegregation events that occurred in Jefferson County in the mid-seventies which was at a rate greater than found in the present study. The differences between the two studies result from Armor's assumption that outmigration is linear while the present study demonstrated that it is curvilinear.

From the previous section it can be seen that the most important manifestation of parental non-compliance with the desegregation plan shows up in transfers to non-public schools. The majority of transfers to Catholic Schools came during the year preceding implementation of the desegregation plan when parents were able to anticipate the eventual judicial order. At that point there was a sizeable movement to Catholic schools. When the desegregation plan was actually implemented Catholic school officials declared that their schools would not become a haven

for those opposing school desegregation. They apparently were successful because enrollment in these schools leveled off. At the same time there was a sizeable movement of children to non-public schools other than Catholic schools. The following section consists of a summary of the results of interviews with fifty (50) parents of children who have transferred their children to non-public schools and compared this group to 27 parents who moved out of the county.

Parents transferring their children to non-public schools are slightly more affluent than parents who are making residential changes out of the county. Forty-two percent (42%) of the non-public parents reported incomes in the $15,000 - $25,000 income range, whereas 33% of those respondents making residential changes reported incomes in this range. Both groups are characterized by higher income levels than the typical Jefferson County resident.

Fathers of children who were transferred to non-public schools were better educated than the other groups, with 54% having at least attempted college; 33% of those fathers making residential changes out of the county had attempted college. The norm for Jefferson County was 31% (Urban Studies, 1978). The wives in both groups were less educated than were the husbands.

The fathers of children who were transferred to non-public schools were nearly equally divided between professional (38%) and skilled (36%). Those who moved out of the county were predominantly skilled (54%) with only 18% professional. About half of the mothers in both groups were housewives with the rest divided among skilled, unskilled and clerical.

The religious affiliations of both groups were predominantly Protestant, although there was a larger percentage of parents of children who transferred to non-public schools who were Catholic.

The parents of children who were transferred to non-public schools tend to be younger than those who move out of the county. Sixty-four percent (64%) of the first group are between 25 and 30 while only 15% of the second group is in this age range. The percentages are reversed for the 31 to 40 age range with only 15% of those transferring their children to non-public schools in this range while 74% of those moving out of the county fall into that age range.

To summarize, parents of children who were transferred to non-public schools tend to be younger, better educated and more likely to be professionals than those parents who leave the county. Parents of children who were transferred to non-public schools reported slightly higher incomes than those who left the county. The discrepancy between the two would have been even greater if the results had been adjusted for age.

Few parents of children who have been transferred to non-public schools or who have moved out of the county favor full separation of the races but they differ in terms of whether they support "full" or "some" integration. Twenty-eight (28%) favor "full" integration among those parents with children in non-public schools while 52% favor "some" integration. Among those moving out of the county 52% favor "full" and 33% favor "some." Ninety-two percent (92%) of those parents who have had their children transferred to non-public schools oppose busing, as compared with 78% of those who changed residences opposing. In both cases they tend to oppose busing strongly. Among those who oppose busing, nearly the same percent (52% and 58%) could foresee circumstances in which such an approach might be acceptable.

Parents of children who transferred to non-public schools were highly critical of the quality of education in Jefferson County. None of these parents found it very satisfactory and only 12% of the parents found it satisfactory. Thirty-four percent (34%) found it unsatisfactory and 46% found it very unsatisfactory. Among parents who had changed residences to counties out of Jefferson County, 4% found it very satisfactory, 33% found it satisfactory, 26% unsatisfactory and 33% found it very unsatisfactory. When these results are compared to those of Survey #11 conducted by the Urban Studies Center (1978) of the University of Louisville in which residents across Jefferson County were asked the same questions, it was found that the responses of these parents who had left Jefferson County were similar to the norm while those who had their children transferred to non-public schools were more highly critical of the school system.

Eighty percent (80%) of those parents who transferred their children to non-public schools perceived that the quality of education for white students in Jefferson County public schools had deteriorated since the implementation of the desegregation plan. None of the non-public parents felt the educational quality had improved, and only 8% believed that it stayed the same. Of the parents who had moved out of Jefferson County, 63% said the educational quality in Jefferson County public schools had become worse, 30% felt it stayed the same, and none of the parents believed it had improved.

Seventy-four percent (74%) of the parents of children who had been transferred to non-public schools believed that their childrens' new school was better than the one in which they had been previously enrolled.

Forty-eight percent (48%) of those parents who had moved out of the county said that their childrens' new school was better than the old, but 26% rated it about the same.

It is unlikely that the preponderance of persons who have transferred their children to non-public schools are those who participated actively in the street demonstrations and other open protests against desegregation. Instead, they observed the desegregation process, the reactions of the school and community, and decided, for whatever reason, that the quality of education would be adversely effected and they transferred their children to non-public schools

The number of children lost to non-public schools is large and includes families which public schools can ill afford to lose. The parents tend to be above average in education and employed in the professions. They could potentially provide active and effective support of the public schools. Perhaps many of these parents would have continued sending their children to public schools had they not become convinced that the quality of education would suffer with the implementation of a desegregation plan.

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